

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS



I hope that everyone has had a very Merry Christmas and is looking forward to 2026. It will be a busy year for our elected leaders with a looming potential shutdown (again) of the government at the end of January. This last one, long as it lasted, was very damaging to our military. The essential services were carried out to be sure (as an excepted employee I worked throughout the shutdown but was not paid until after the end). Economists will tell you about its impact on the economy, it affects everyone in some way. That is why what each of us does to influence our elected officials by taking action is so important. You might imagine that if someone you voted for is in congress they will be voting as you wish and that may be true. However, they can use the number of constituents that contact them on issues as a demonstration to others that might not vote the same way. In 2000 as the commander of mobile operations centers in the Balkans I spoke with my Sailors and Marines about the importance of voting absentee regardless of who they voted for. One of them told me that it was a waste, his single vote did not count and declined the offer of a request for an absentee ballot. For those that recall, the Presidential election in 2000 came down to a few votes (remember hanging chads?). Florida was a key state, that was the state this Sailor called home and would have voted in the election. I have no idea who he would have voted for clearly his vote would have counted for something.

I have chosen a few articles from recent weekly MOAA newsletters, I hope you enjoy them and take action where appropriate.

You can support those efforts by being part of the action. A way to do that is to sign up for the MOAA legislative alerts visit https://moaa.quorum.us/sign_in/ .

To help you stay informed about issues, please consider subscribing to the MOAA Newsletter which is sent out two to four times per month on Thursdays via email. You can sign up at www.moaa.org. Please let me know how you think I can make this column better for you by sending an email to me at dave.mitchell@pmoaa.org .

Also, if you are not aware, the Florida Council of Chapters (FCoC) publishes a newsletter every other month. It can be viewed here at <https://flmoaa.org/news/>

Your voice needs to be heard by our Florida Congressional Delegation. Please use some or all of the links available within this Legislative Affairs column and subscribe to the automatic notifications I mentioned above. The Pensacola Chapter of MOAA is a member of the Florida Council of Chapters, FCoC at flmoaa.org and an affiliate of the [Military Officers Association of America \(MOAA\)](#) who together are the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. We are an independent, nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organization. MOAA has several critical legislative issues they are championing. Become an advocate and **Take Action NOW!** at <https://moaa.quorum.us/>

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NDAA Update: Must-Pass Defense Policy Bill Clears Senate

By Kevin Lilley

From December 18th MOAA Newsletter

The FY 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) cleared the Senate on Dec. 17 by a 77-20 margin and will move to the president's desk for signature.

The \$901 billion measure passed the House 312-112 on Dec. 10. MOAA outlined key elements of the legislation [at that time](#), to include:

- A 3.8% basic pay raise, in line with private-industry benchmarks.
- Further protections against medical billet cuts at military treatment facilities.
- A range of additional improvements for currently serving members and their families, to include child care fee assistance, an increase in Family Separation Allowance, and a report on unreimbursed expenses attached to PCS moves.

What's Next for Congress

- Dec. 18 marks the last day of the year when both the House and Senate are scheduled to be in session. The House will adjourn for the year that day, while the Senate is set to end its year Dec. 19. Both are set to return the week of Jan. 5, 2026.
- Lawmakers have less than a month to avert another federal funding lapse, as the continuing resolution (CR) ending the recent record-setting shutdown (Oct. 1-Nov. 12) will expire Jan. 30. Some appropriations bills, to include a measure to fund military construction and the VA, were passed as part of CR negotiations, meaning this shutdown would not affect all corners of the government.
- However, defense appropriations have not been approved for the fiscal year, meaning those who serve and have served will face many of the same challenges they planned for in the fall: The potential of missed paychecks, delayed or discontinued support programs, last-minute changes to PCS moves or training timetables, and other fallout.

MOAA Government Relations staff members continue to analyze the NDAA and will offer greater details on these issues and others in the coming weeks.

Congress to Require Greater Oversight of Military Health Restructuring By Patricia Kime (originally appearing in Military Times) From December 18th MOAA Newsletter

Members of Congress are seeking to more closely monitor the Defense Department's plans to modify or downsize military hospitals and clinics by requiring more oversight and adding years to a ban on reducing the services' number of medical personnel.

The proposed fiscal 2026 [National Defense Authorization Act](#) released calls for the Joint Chiefs of Staff and service surgeons general to review any proposed changes to military treatment facilities to determine whether they would affect military readiness.

Under the legislation, the Defense Health Agency director also will have to explain how service members, families, retirees and other beneficiaries would receive medical care if changes to military facilities affect their access to medical care.

In a statement accompanying the bill, House and Senate negotiators said they were concerned about the effects that downsizing facilities or personnel could have on operations.

“We expect that any proposed restructuring, realignment, or modification to military medical treatment facilities will be conducted in collaboration with the appropriate Department of Defense stakeholders … to ensure that operational readiness is not impacted by any proposed changes,” they wrote.

The provisions follow a flurry of questions from Congress this year over the Defense Department’s plans to reorganize the military health system, to include downsizing or modifying some military treatment facilities.

When the Defense Health Agency was created, it was given responsibility for managing the military services’ hospitals and clinics as well as the authority to reconfigure staffing and consolidate facilities.

The agency originally [planned to realign 50 facilities, including 38 that would serve military personnel only](#), while the services aimed to cut roughly 12,800 military health billets. Under the plan, an estimated 200,000 active-duty family members and retirees were to be shifted to nonmilitary providers managed by the Tricare health program.

A list of the affected facilities was published in 2020, but the reforms were paused early in the COVID-19 pandemic. Later, the plan was adjusted to build capacity at some facilities by bringing back patients and improving training opportunities for medical personnel.

In 2023, another list was published of 32 facilities slated for realignment, and lawmakers have since raised concerns regarding several hospitals that weren’t on that list.

Rep. Pat Ryan, D-N.Y., said in July that Keller Army Community Hospital at West Point would lose its inpatient beds, downsized to a clinic.

Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., sought protections in the Senate defense spending bill for a full-service hospital currently under construction at [Fort Leonard Wood](#) following rumors that it would open next year as an ambulatory clinic.

And Sen. Jon Ossoff, D-Ga., demanded answers regarding the Eisenhower Army Medical Center at Fort Gordon amid concerns that it, too, was slated to lose its inpatient, emergency room and surgical services.

Ossoff wrote Dr. David Smith, acting DHA director, asking for more information on the organization's plans for the hospital. Smith responded this month, saying the review is ongoing and no final decision has been made.

"There are significant pressures on the Defense Health Program for Fiscal Year 2026 and beyond," Smith wrote in a [letter published Dec. 9 by WRDW/WAGT](#) in Augusta, Georgia.

"The Department as a whole is undertaking a comprehensive review of where to optimally assign its military medical personnel in order to achieve the best outcomes in quality, safety and readiness of the force and is working with the Military Departments to mitigate access to care and capacity challenges," Smith wrote.

During a conference on military policy issues hosted by the Military Officers Association of America on Oct. 28, acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr. Stephen Ferrara said the review process is fluid.

"I think there is always a lot of rumors about whether there's a report that's going to come out, and that's not the case. It's like if you looked at any corporation that has 100 hospitals or stores, they should be looking at them to see where it makes sense to dedicate their resources," Ferrara said.

As part of the reform process, the military services had originally planned to reduce the number of uniformed personnel serving in military hospitals and clinics. The proposed bill extends a restriction placed by Congress on this effort by five years, stretching it from 2027 through 2032.

In addition to the provisions addressing military health facilities, beneficiaries could see more money in their pockets regarding travel reimbursement for specialty care. Currently, travel costs are only reimbursed for those who must go 100 miles or more for care; the bill reduces the distance to 75 miles.

The bill also directs the Defense Department to reopen chiropractic clinics that have been closed on installations. While chiropractic care is not covered by the Tricare health program, some hospitals and clinics contained clinics that treated active-duty personnel. Congress wants the DOD to reopen any clinics that were closed and provided at least 400 appointments per month.

For expecting mothers who had hoped to see broader childbirth options, the final bill does not include a provision that would have let beneficiaries switch to Tricare Select when they became pregnant. It also dropped a pilot program that would have covered midwife services from providers who are not nurses.

In terms of service members' health, the bill requires the Defense Department to conduct a study of cancers among rotary-wing pilots and air crew and a study on the psychological health of combat drone operators.

70 Commissaries Will Offer Doorstep Delivery Within a Month

By Karen Jowers (originally appeared in Military Times)

From December 18th MOAA Newsletter

Eligible commissary shoppers near an additional 62 military commissaries will be able to have discounted groceries delivered to their doorstep within a month, the head of the company that is to provide the service told Military Times on Dec. 10.

Defense Commissary Agency officials have awarded a contract for the delivery to [OnPoint](#), a delivery service previously known as ChowCall, said Todd Waldemar, founder and CEO of the company. The 70 commissaries that are part of the contract include eight pilot locations that have been offering the delivery service since 2022. Waldemar said the remaining 62 stores will be offering service by Jan. 11.

“These 70 include the largest military markets, so I estimate that they represent over half of the total [U.S.] military population,” Waldemar said.

A spokesman for commissary officials did not immediately confirm the award of the contract, and it had not been published on Sam.gov by the time this article was published.

The contract includes the flexibility to expand to the remaining 108 commissaries in the United States. That expansion to all 178 commissaries is optional and is up to the commissary agency, Waldemar said.

“But we hope to get delivery in all markets as soon as we can. I think it would be realistic to see all markets have delivery by the summer,” he said, emphasizing that he does not speak for the commissary agency.

Commissary officials are not considering doorstep delivery for overseas commissaries because of overseas regulatory constraints.

The initial contract award is for \$14 million, Waldemar said. Delivery will be available within a 20-mile radius of the commissaries.

Commissary officials have provided an online, curbside pickup service for customers for a number of years, and have been working to find a way to provide the delivery service, too.

“We need this. Our customers want and need this contract,” John Hall, director of the Defense Commissary Agency, told a meeting in March. “I’m really excited about this,” he said.

Under the system, customers order groceries online, which are retrieved by store employees who pick the items and hand the orders over to OnPoint. OnPoint then

delivers the groceries to the customer's location. The delivery can occur as soon as three hours after the order is submitted, depending on the location, because commissaries need the time to pack the order.

The commissary agency will not subsidize the delivery costs for customers. The fee will be \$17.75 for those within 10 miles and \$31.25 for those within 11 to 20 miles. The commissary agency does not have the flexibility in pricing delivery fees that commercial retailers do, because of their limitations in marking up prices, for example.

Customers pay the delivery fee in addition to the cost of their groceries, the usual 5% commissary surcharge, and any tip for the driver.

OnPoint has been gearing up for expansion and is also hiring delivery drivers in all 70 areas, Waldemar said. About 80% of their employees are affiliated with the military, as spouses or veterans, for example. They are paid according to the wage scale under the Service Contract Act, which varies from area to area, and receive fringe benefits, he said.

ChowCall/OnPoint has delivered more than 40,000 loads of groceries since beginning commissary deliveries in June 2022, Waldemar said.

Customers using the current delivery pilot program range from active-duty families to troops living in barracks, retirees and disabled veterans and people who want to get a head start on shopping or a bite to eat while at work. The service can be especially helpful to young families of troops who are deployed, such as spouses with young children, Waldemar said.

More than 50% of customers using the delivery are within 5 miles of their commissary, he said.

Those eligible for the commissary shopping benefit include active-duty, Guard and Reserve members, military retirees, Medal of Honor recipients and their authorized family members. Veterans with any Veterans Affairs Department-documented, service-connected disability rating are now eligible for commissary shopping, as well as Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war and those who have been approved and designated as the primary caregivers of eligible veterans by the VA.

Waldemar said he has received positive feedback from customers about the delivery, including some disabled veterans who said they depend on the commissary delivery. One veteran who cannot drive called it a lifeline, Waldemar said.

"Our mission is to really solve this problem, and really make a big impact across the whole military for quality of life," Waldemar said. His company has made over 2 million deliveries of food and merchandise to military bases for 15 years, he said.

"The problem as we see it, is that the delivery of goods and services is either nonexistent or minimal in most military markets," he said. So those who live and work on military bases do not have as many options as everyone else does, he said, partially because access to military bases is harder.

"We want to solve that problem by giving more options to the military, more options to the dependents in family housing, more options to the young service member who doesn't have a vehicle, stuck in the barracks.

"My son, for example, just enlisted in the Air Force. He's living in barracks. He told me the other day, totally unsolicited, 'Dad I finally understand what your company does,' because he's on a base where all he can get is pizza from the gas station down the road.

"That's it. We want to totally change that. We want to have options; we want to have convenience for everybody that's on bases."

Editors Note: In our area, NAS Pensacola; Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field were listed.

Here's When You Can Access Your 2025 Tax Statements
By Kevin Lilley
From December 18th MOAA Newsletter

Some year-end tax documents already are available via the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) [myPay portal](#), with others set to post in the coming days. Those who receive the forms via postal mail will have a longer wait.

Military retirees, former spouses, and annuitants should have access to their IRS Form 1099-R via myPay as of Dec. 17, [according to a DFAS news release](#). Other key 2026 dates for myPay forms:

- **Jan. 7:** W-2s for Army, Navy, Air Force, and Space Force Reserve members.
- **Jan. 16:** W-2s for active and reserve Marine Corps members.
- **Jan. 21:** W-2s for active Army, Navy, Air Force, and Space Force members.
- **Jan. 23:** 1099-INTs for [Savings Deposit Program](#) participants.

Dates for other IRS forms, to include those provided to civilian employees served by DFAS, [are available in the news release](#).

[2026 IRS ROUNDUP: [New Limits for Retirement Plans, Plus Brackets and More](#)]

Forms by Mail

Physical tax forms will be sent to those who've requested the forms as well as those who do not have a myPay account. They will be mailed by DFAS by Jan. 31, according to the release. Instructions for creating a myPay profile, or restoring lost/forgotten login information, are available [on the myPay website](#).

If you do not receive tax materials via mail by mid-February and do not have a myPay account, use these DFAS resources to procure your forms:

- **Telephone Self-Service:** Beneficiaries can call (800) 321-1080 to request a tax form reissue. Follow the automatic prompts; you will be asked for a Social Security number as identification. Requests are processed in seven to 10 days.
- **askDFAS:** Retirees and annuitants can request a reissued form be sent to their address on file or a temporary mailing address [using the online portal](#). Note: Reissues are not generally available until mid-February.
- **By Mail:** Detailed instructions from DFAS on requesting 1099-R forms via mail are available [at the DFAS website](#). These requests can take up to 60 days to process.

Changing Your Address

Tax documents will be sent to the beneficiary's address on record with DFAS. Need to make a change?

Retirees: [Change your mailing address online](#) or by completing [this form](#) and returning it to DFAS at Defense Finance and Accounting Service, U.S. Military Retired Pay, 8899 E 56th St., Indianapolis, IN 46249-1200, or via fax at (800) 469-6559.

Annuitants: [Change your mailing address online](#) or by completing [this form](#) and returning it to DFAS at Defense Finance and Accounting Service, U.S. Military Annuitant Pay, 8899 E 56th St., Indianapolis, IN 46249-1300, or via fax at (800) 982-8459

Coast Guard PPC

The Coast Guard Pay and Personnel Center (PPC) did not publish a release with its tax-form data, but will mail all W-2 and 1095-C forms by Jan. 31, [according to its website](#), and will have printable versions of those forms, as well as 1099R forms (for retirees) available via its [Direct Access system](#) by that date.

**Compiled and Edited by
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